

LEGO Story/Roleplay Theme Proposal: Journey Into The Unknown

Why An Inhouse Developed Toy Line

The missing pieces in The LEGO Groups product lineup

When The LEGO Groups started making LEGO sets with LEGO bricks there was no Star Wars, Harry Potter, Lord of The Rings, or Minecraft to help drive sales based on popular intellectual properties and well-established and popular brands. The LEGO Group had to come up with its own designs and stories to drive sales. For years they did this with the LEGOLAND Town, Classic Space, Castle, and Pirates lines of products. As time-based and they grew into making products that tied into popular IPs, their in-house developed products became less and less prevalent, taking a back seat to let the more established properties shine, whether by choice or force. In recent years, in-house developed product lines have become scarce, and when they are put out to the public, they drive little sales due to a mixture of poor marketing, confusing products, over-designed products, and the product line not having something to justify the product's existence.

Based on feedback and some little research I've done with the general public and community of LEGO fans, there are plenty of LEGO fans who would like to see more in-house LEGO product lines, rather than IP-based lines. Many fans enjoyed product lines for varying reasons, such as the lower pricing (due to not having to factor the licensing fee into the product cost) and the more creative designs. Some of these themes include but are not limited to Ninjago, Bionicle, Power Miners, Friends, City, Space Police, Nexo Knights, Elves, and Hero Factory. Each of these product lines has had varying ranges of successes and failures. Ninjago, City, Friends, and Bionicle have been/were some of LEGO's most long-lasting product lines, with successes due to many reasons such as tie-in television series, books, comics, online video shorts, video games, and strong marketing. But to the eyes of many themes such as Nexo Knights, VIDIYO, Galidor, Hidden Side, and LEGO Fusion were failures due to reasons such as poor product design, relying too heavily on external product enhancers like tie-in smart device apps, poor branding, marketing and packaging that confuses consumers on what the product is. Due to these failures, The LEGO Group has understandably played it safe in recent years by leaning more into IP product lines rather than spending the time and resources into developing in-house designs.

It is due to this recent lack of properly developed in-house product lines, that this concept was developed to see if there was an idea that could be presented to help The LEGO Group see that there is value in putting the resources into developing more in-house product lines, rather than relying so heavily on IP based product lines. *Journey Into The Unknown* was developed to help fill in that gap in in-house product lines.



What is *Journey Into The Unknown* About?

The story and reasoning behind it

Journey Into The Unknown follows the adventures of Professor Greeble and her best friend and lab assistant Maxwell as they traverse the Multiverse in the crazy multiverse-traveling car that they built together. Prof. Greeble and Max travel the multiverse to learn and explore the endless possibilities that fill the multiverse. Along the way, they meet a variety of characters such as Paul Parsley the Rabbit and Cyborg-Athena. They also encounter and foil the schemes of the 'Verse Raiders, a group of robot pirates that travel the multiverse and steal the treasures in each universe.

Today, the idea of the many world theory, or the multiverse has become more and more prevalent in pop culture in media such as Marvel and DC Comics and their respective films and television series and *Rick and Morty* and their dimension-hopping antics. The name *Journey Into The Unknown* stems from the classic Marvel Comics series *Journey Into Mystery*. The concept of the multiverse allows for lots of diverse storytelling and designs to be made for the story or concept you are telling. This is the perfect concept for LEGO to delve into as the products made by LEGO cover a vast range but are separated by each product line, the concept of the multiverse would allow the LEGO set designers to create some crazy and outlandish ideas that cover all aspects of the LEGO design portfolio. *Journey Into The Unknown* could also open the door to a lot of possibilities such as tying into retired fan favorite product lines and bringing aspects of it back into *Journey Into The Unknown*, as well as bringing in designs, concepts, or products that fans have desired for years but may not have fit in pre-existing product lines. The multiverse allows for many storytelling and design possibilities that if done properly could be very profitable for The LEGO Group. Additionally, the play potential of *Journey Into The Unknown* is not like anything before from a marketing perspective as with the idea of crossing over into other universes, the sets of *Journey Into The Unknown* could be marketed to be purchased with sets from other in-house product lines like City and Ninjago and have the characters interact with one another. LEGO is a unique toy in that there is an unspoken idea for kids to mix sets together in their bins of pieces and during play, now from a marketing standpoint with *Journey Into The Unknown*, it can be shown and encouraged to kids to mix their sets, minifigures, and parts to create your multiverse.

Additionally, the theme is focused on exploration and the story of each universe with storytelling and roleplay, with little reliance on action and potentially violent storytelling. The LEGO Group has a major drive to focus on reducing the violent depictions of stories in their sets, so a story with a focus on exploration rather than conflict, like the original *Star Trek* television series, would be a great route to follow. But a story does need conflict, hence the addition of the 'Verse Raiders, but rather than being having a focus on destruction or control, they have a focus on stealing, which done correctly could be depicted in a more humorous and light-hearted manner that would not conflict with The LEGO Group's nonviolent messages.

Set and Packaging Designs and How To Tie Together

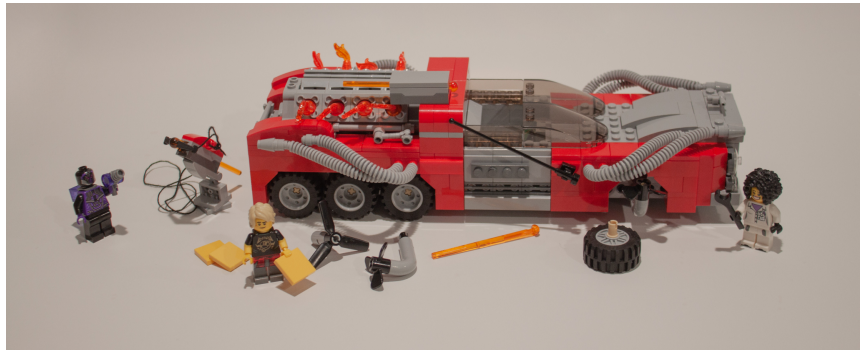
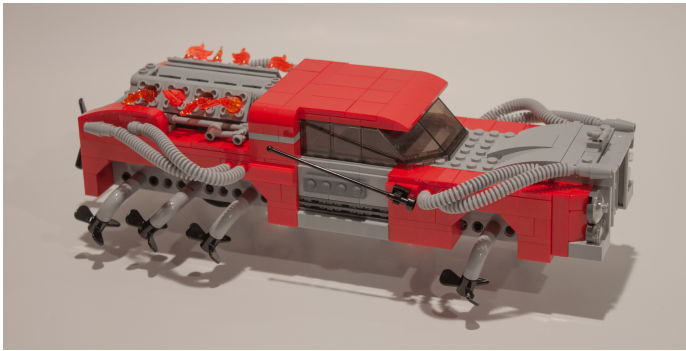
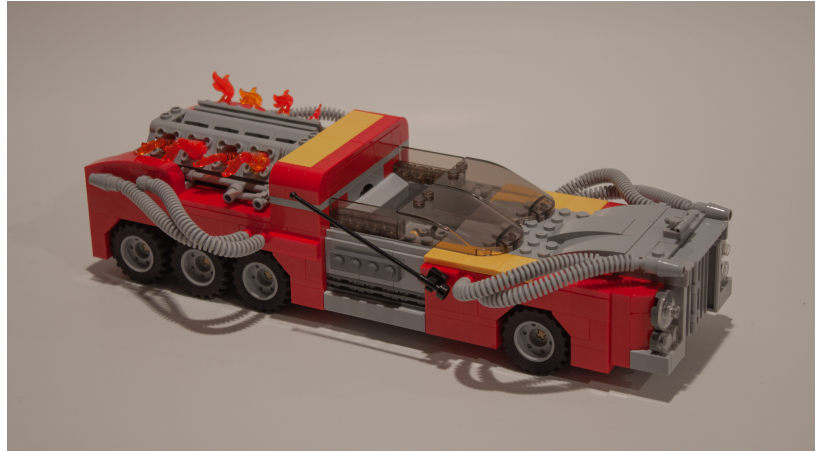
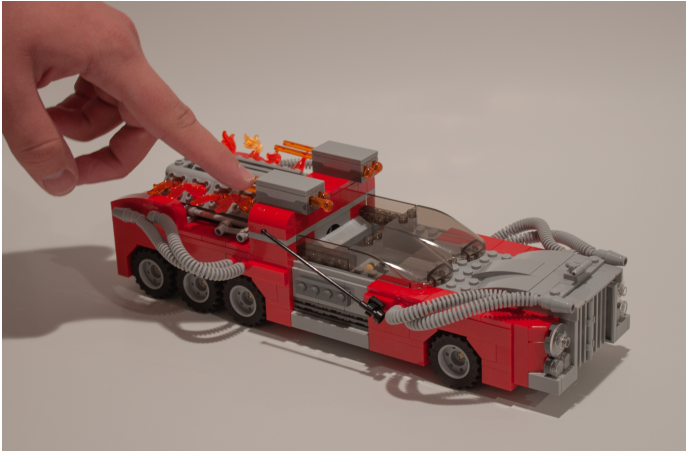
Journey Into The Unknown is based on exploring the multiverse, which will allow for a lot of varying designs of products, that if not planned properly, could lead to the feeling of a disjointed and unconnected product line. One solution to this is a strong and consistent packaging design that depicts to the consumer that the product line involves exploring different worlds. Another solution is to have a product feature that ties all the products together, the one depicted in this concept design is add-on parts to the flagship set that enhances the vehicles' abilities as Prof. Greeble and Max drive through the many different universes of the multiverse.

Examples of add-ons in each set in this concept include:

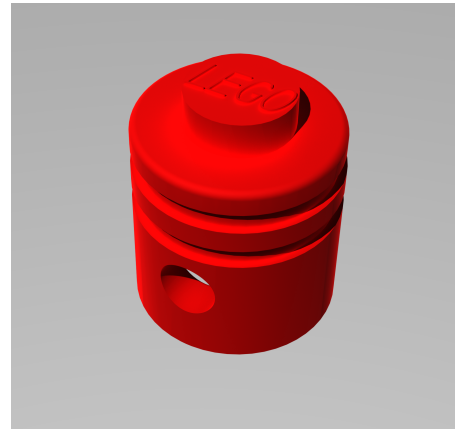
- Junkyard Workshop, includes grapple blaster.
- The Bunny Cafe, includes printed animal ties for camouflage.
- Attack of The Cyborg Minotaur, includes spring-loaded defense launchers.
- The Epic Multiversal Traveler (T.E.M.T.), includes cockpit cover and underwater propellers.



Example of Packaging and Set Designs



Examples of Different Customization Options From Each of The Four Concept Sets



*Custom part/modification of official LEGO element made to allow for connection to create fire blasting engine
Left: Original LEGO Element, Right: Modified/Custom Element*

Conclusion

If and when done with careful planning in product design, development, reasoning, and marketing, The LEGO Group can put out stellar in-house developed product lines. Lines such as Ninjago, Friends, and City are clear evidence that they can achieve this. Although currently, they have focused mostly on IP product lines, fans hope to see something new and original from The LEGO Group that would encourage them to seek out creative ideas and storytelling opportunities.